

- Johnson, P.N. 1994. Selection and use of nest site by Barn Owls in Norfolk, England. *Raptor Res.* 28: 149 – 153.
- Grimmett, R. and C. Inskipp. 1999. "Birds of the Indian Subcontinent" Oxford University press, New Delhi.
- Hoi, H., Schleicher, B. & Valera, F. 1994. Female mate Choice and nest Desertion in penduline tits, *Remiz pendulinus*, the importance Nest quality. *Animal Behaviour*, 48, 743 – 746.
- Newton, I. 1995. The Contribution of some recent research on birds to ecological Understanding. *J. Anim. Ecol.* 64, 675 – 696.
- Sampath, K. and K. Krishnamurthy. 1993. Birds of Pichavaram mangroves and the Adjoining costal environs. *J. Ecol. Soc.* 6: 23 – 28.
- Soler, J.J., Moller, A.P. & Linden, M. 1996. Nest building, sexual selection and parental investment. *Evolutionary Ecology*. 12, 427 – 441.

- Urli, A.J., 2003. Breeding ecology of Birds: Why do some species nest singly while others are colonial. *Resonance*, 2003, 8, 22 – 32.
- Welty, C.J. 1982. *The Life of Birds*. W.B. Saunders Co. London
- Winkler, D.W., and F.h. Sheldow. 1993. Evolution of nest construction in swallows (Hirundinidae): a molecular phylogenetic perspective. *Proc. Natl.*

Web Based References

- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/wire-tailed_swallow
- [http://www.explorebiodiversity.com/BIRDS?Birds of World/Families? Passeriformes.htm](http://www.explorebiodiversity.com/BIRDS?Birds%20of%20World/Families?Passeriformes.htm)
- <http://ladywildlife.com/animal/howbirdsbuildtheirnests.html>



The Palani Hills Birdwatchers' Society had organized the 2nd South Indian Birdwatcher's Fair in Gandhigram Rural University, Dindigul from 23rd to 25th February, 2007. During the Fair, Birdwatching field trips to Athoor dam, Vadakarai tank, Sirumalai Hills and Gandhigram University Campus were conducted for the delegates and participants.

Our team consisted of Prabhu, Asian Wildlife Foundation, Rahman, Education Officer, W.W.F., A.P. Office, Hyderabad and myself. While travelling in Vaigai Express we sighted 10 spot billed pelicans, over 200 cattle egrets and 4 grey herons in Chenulpet lake. Large extents of the lake margin are invaded by *Eichhornia crassipes*.

Palani hills forming the eastern spur of the Western Ghats is divided into Upper Palnis in the West, covering an area of 385 sq kms with an altitude of 2200 mts and the Lower Palanis covering 1683 sq kms with an altitude of 1600 mts lying below Kodaikanal. Palani hills region is recognized as a 'biodiversity hot spot'.

Sirumalais meaning small hills lie in Lower Palani hills located between 10° 07' – 10° 18' N and 77° 55' – 78° 12' E with an altitude of 800 mts. The hills are rectangular in outline covering an area of 317 sq kms. The mountain ridge slopes down North-East on which the only motorable ghat road is laid. There are other ridges sloping towards South, South-East and East. Mullapanimalai, Vellimalai, Kalugumalai and Madagamalai are the main peaks, Mullapanimalai being the highest (1379 mts.). Sattiar, Kalankaluvai and Sirumalai are the three rivulets which flow down the hills.

The vegetation consists of tropical dry deciduous forest type (Champion, 1936), dry evergreen forests, riparian forests and thorn forest with thorny thickets. N.E. monsoon brings the bulk of the annual rainfall while the S.W. monsoon brings sporadic rains. So far 895 floral species belonging to 536 genera have been recorded as a result of systematic exploration.

The dales and valleys on either side of the ghat road are clothed with dense forests bisected by jungle streamlets. As we approach Sirumalai Pudur village, coffee plantations

A Day at Sirumalai in Palni Hills

S. Ashok Kumar

Plot No. 491, Road No. 10, Jubilee Hills, Hyderabad – 500 033

mixed with forested tracts, pepper estates, banana and citrus plantations come into view. The ensemble of barbets greeted us and their choir floated across the forest, resounded and reverberated in the surrounding tranquil valleys as the birds celebrated the advent of yet another day. The music concert of these Beethovens of the forest went on till dusk with hardly any respite.

While trekking on a bridle path between forest and coffee plantation, we witnessed a male Asian Paradise-Flycatcher vigorously patrolling its territory in the coffee plantation while a juvenile male Asian Paradise-Flycatcher was lurking in the forest on the opposite side. This went on for full one hour and we had to retreat as dusk was descending.

Sirumalai hills and the surrounding areas are rich in bird life and according to Palani Hills Birdwatchers' Society, more than 250 species have been recorded so far. We chanced upon the biggest butterfly of South India, the Southern Birdwing butterfly. We trekked to Agasthyipuram, the earliest human settlement in the hills and enroute recorded several species of birds and butterflies such as Chocolate pansy, Common sailor, Glad-eye Bush brown, Common Cerulian, Silverstreak blue, Angled castor, Common Jezebel, Crimson rose, Common Bushbrown and Striped Blue tiger.

The following is the systematic list of birds observed in Gandhigram Rural University Campus (G.U.), Athoor Dam (A), Vadakarai Tank (V) and Sirumalai Hills (S).

Grebes

Little grebe (V)

Cormorants

Great Cormorant (V)

Darters

Darter (V)

Herons, Egrets and Bitterns

Little egret (V)

Large Egret (V)

Cattle egret (V)

Grey heron (V)

Purple heron (V)

Indian Pond-heron (V)

Podicipedidae

Tachybaptus ruficollis (Pallas, 1964)

Phalacrocoracidae

Phalacrocorax carbo (Linnaeus, 1758)

Anhingidae

Anhinga melanogaster (Pennant, 1969)

Ardeidae

Egretta garzetta (Linnaeus, 1966)

Casmerodius albus (Linnaeus, 1758)

Bubulcus ibis (Linnaeus, 1758)

Ardea cinerea (Linnaeus, 1758)

Ardea purpurea (Linnaeus, 1766)

Ardeola grayii (Sykes, 1832).



Storks

Painted stork (V)
Asian Open-bill stork (V)
White-necked stork (V)

Geese & Ducks

Comb duck (V)
Northern Shoveller (V)
Common Pochard (V)
Spot-billed duck (V)
Garganey (V)
Eurasian Wigeon (V)
Lesser whistling teal (V)

Hawks, eagles, kites etc.

Shikra (G.R., S)
Crested serpent eagle (S)
Mountain hawk eagle (S)
Black-shouldered kite (G.U.,S)
Brahminy kite (V)

Pheasants, Partridges & Quails

Grey Junglefowl (S)
Grey Francolin (A)

Rails, Crakes, Moorhens, coots

White-breasted Waterhen. (A)
Purple moorhen (V)
Common coot (V)

Jacanas

Peasant-tailed Jacana (V)

Plovers, Lapwings etc.

Red-wattled Lapwing (A, V)

Sandpipers, Snipes etc.

Common snipe (V)
Common green Shank (V)
Common sandpiper (V)

Ibisbill, Avocets & Stilts

Black-winged stilts (V)

Gulls, Terns etc.

Gull-billed Tern (V)

Pigeons & Doves

Spotted dove (S)
Emerald dove (A)

Parakeets etc

Blue-winged parakeet (S)

Cuckoos, Malkohas & Coucals

Indian plaintive cuckoo (A)
Pied Crested cuckoo (G.U.)
Brainfever Bird (A, G.U.)
Large Greenbilled Malkoha (V)
Greater Coucal (G.U., A, S)
Asian Koel (G.U, A)

Owis

Spotted Owlet (G.U)

Swifts

Alpine swift (S)

Kingfishers

White-breasted King-fisher
(V,S,G.U.)

Small Blue Kingfisher (A)
Pied kingfisher (V) Lesser

Bee-eaters

Small Bee-eater (S, V)
Blue-tailed Bee-eater (V)

Rollers

Indian Roller (G.U.)

Hoopoes

Common hoopoe (V.S.)

Ciconiidae

Mycteria leucocephala (Pennant, 1769)
Anastomus oscitans (Boddaert, 1783)
Ciconia episcopus (Boddaert, 1783)

Anatidae

Sarkidiornis melanotos (Pennant, 1969)
Anas clypeata (Linnaeus, 1758)
Aythya ferina (Linnaeus, 1758)
Anas acuta (Linnaeus, 1958/1781)
Anas querquedula (Linnaeus, 1958)
Anas penelope (Linnaeus, 1758)
Dendrocygna javanica (Horsfield, 1821)

Accipitridae

Accipiter badius (Gmelin, 1788)
Spilornis cheela (Latham, 1790)
Spizaetus nipalensis (Hodgson, 1836)
Elanus caeruleus (Desfontaine, 1789)
Haliastur indus (Boddaert, 1783)

Phasianidae

Gallus sonneratii (Temminck, 1813)
Francolinus pondicerianus (Gmelin, 1789)

Rallidae

Amauornis phoenicurus (Pennant, 1858)
Porphyrio porphyrio (Linnaeus, 1758)
Fulica atra (Linnaeus, 1758)

Jacaniidae

Hydrophasianus chirurgus (Scopoli, 1786)

Charadriidae

Vanellus gregarius (Pallas, 1771)

Scolopacidae

Gallinago gallinago (Linnaeus, 1758)
Tringa nebularia (Gunner, 1767)
Actitis hypoleucos (Linnaeus, 1758)

Recurvirostridae

Himantopus himantopus (Linnaeus, 1758)

Laridae

Gelochelidon nilotica (Gmelin, 1789)

Columbidae

Streptopelia chinensis (Scopoli, 1786)
Chalcophaps indica (Linnaeus, 1758)

Psittacidae

Psittacula columboides (Vigors, 1830)

Cuculidae

Cacomantis passerinus (Vhai, 1797)
Clamator jacobinus (Boddaert, 1783)
Hierococcyx varius (Vahl, 1797)
Phaenicophaeus tristis (Lesson, 1830)
Centropus sinensis (Stephens, 1815)
Eudynamis scolopacea (Linnaeus 1758)

Strigidae

Athene brama (Temminck, 1821)

Apodidae

Tachymarptis melba (Linnaeus, 1758)

Alcedinidae

Halcyon smyrnensis (Linnaeus, 1758)

Alcedo atthis (Linnaeus, 1758)

Ceryle rudis (Linnaeus, 1758)

Meropidae

Merops orientalis (Latham, 1801)

Merops philippinus (Linnaeus, 1766)

Coraciidae

Coracias benghalensis (Linnaeus, 1758)

Upupidae

Upupa epops (Linnaeus, 1758)

Barbets

Coppersmith barbet (G.U.,A,V,S)
White-checked barbet (S)
Great barbet (S)

Woodpeckers

Brown-capped Pigmy
woodpecker (S)

Black-shouldered

Woodpecker (S)

Wagtails & Pipits

Large Pied Wagtail (V, S)

Grey wagtail (S)

Paddyfield Pipit (V)

Cuckoo-shrikes,**Minivets etc.**

Common Woodshrike (S)
Long-tailed Minivet (S)
Black-headed cuckoo-Shrike
(G.U.)

Bulbuls, Finchbills

Red-whiskered bulbul (A,S)

Red-vented bulbul (A,S)

White-browed bulbul (A,V,S)

Ioras, Leafbird,**Fairy-Bluebird**

Common Iora (G.U.)

Asian Fairy-Bluebird (S)

Shrikes

Bay-backed shrike (G.U.)

Thrushes, Robins etc.

Indian Robin (G.U.)

Black Redstart (V)

Oriental Magpie-Robin (V,R,S)

Pied Bushchat (S)

Babblers, Barwings etc

White-headed babbler (G.U.)

Prinias, Warblers etc

Greenish Leaf-Warbler (S)

Flycatchers

Verditer Flycatcher (V, S)

Nilgiri Flycatcher (S)

Monarch &**Paradise – Flycatchers**

Asian Paradise-Flycatcher

(G.U., A, S)

Sunbirds & Spiderhunters

Purple-rumped Sunbird (G.U)

Purple Sunbird (G.U)

Little Spiderhunter (G.U)

White-eyes

Oriental White-eye (S)

Munias

White-throated Munia (V.S.)

Spotted Munia (V)

Starlings & Mynas

Common Myna (G.U)

Orioles

Eurasian Golden Oriole

(G.U., A, S)

Black-beaded Oriole (S)

Drongos

Black Drongo (S, G.U.)

Ashy Drongo (S, G.U.)

White-bellied Drongo (A & S)

Greater Racket-tailed

Drongo (S)

Crows & Treepies,

Indian Treepie (G.U., S)

Jungle Crow (G.U)

Capitonidae

Megalaima haemacephala (P.L. Smuller 1776)

Megalaima viridis (Boddaert, 1783)

Megalaima virens (Boddaert, 1783)

Picidae

Dendrocopos nanus (Vigors, 1832)

Chrysocolaptes festivus (Boddaert, 1783)

Motacillidae

Motacilla maderaspatensis (Gmelin, 1789)

Motacilla cinerea (Tunstall, 1771)

Anthus rufulus (Vieillot, 1818)

Campephagidae

Tephrodornis pondicerianus (Gmelin, 1789)

Pericrocotus ethologus (Bangs & Phillips 1914)

Coracina melanoptera (Ruppell, 1839)

Pycnonotidae

Pycnonotus jocosus (Linnaeus, 1758)

Pycnonotus cafer (Linnaeus, 1766)

Pycnonotus luteolus (Lesson, 1841)

Irenidae

Aegithina tiphia (Linnaeus, 1758)

Irena puella (Latham, 1790)

Laniidae

Lanius vittatus (Valenciennes, 1826)

Turdinae

Saxicoloides fulicata (Linnaeus, 1776)

Phoenicurus ochruros (Gmelin, 1774)

Copsychus saularis (Linnaeus, 1758)

Saxicola caprata (Linnaeus, 1766)

Timaliinae

Turdoides affinis (Jerdon, 1847)

Sylviinae

Phylloscopus trochiloides (Sundevall 1837)

Muscicapinae

Eumyias thalassina (Swainson, 1838)

Eumyias albicaudata (Jerdon, 1840)

Monarchinae

Terpsiphone paradisi (Linnaeus, 1758)

Nectariniidae

Nectarinia zeylonica (Linnaeus, 1766)

Nectarinia asiatica (Latham, 1790)

Arachnothera longirostra (Latham, 1790)

Zosteropidae

Zosterops palpebrosus (Temminck, 1824)

Estrildidae

Lonchura malabarica (Linnaeus, 1758)

Lonchura punctulata (Linnaeus, 1758)

Sturnidae

Acridotheres tristis (Linnaeus, 1766)

Oriolidae

Oriolus oriolus (Linnaeus, 1758)

Oriolus xanthornus (Linnaeus, 1758)

Dicruridae

Dicrurus macrocerus (Vieillot, 1817)

Dicrurus leucophaeus (Vieillot, 1817)

Dicrurus caerulescens (Linnaeus, 1758)

Dicrurus paradiseus (Linnaeus 1766)

Corvidae

Dendrocitta formosae (Swinhoe, 1863)

Corvus macrorhynchos (Wagler, 1827)

